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Soviet and Soviet Surrogate Training of Insurgents

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A Research Paper

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Soviet and Soviet Surrogate Training of Insurgents

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A Research Paper

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This paper was prepared by the Insurgency Branch, Office of Global Issues. Major contributions were made by [redacted] Office of Training and Education; the Office of African and Latin American Analysis; the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis; and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, Instability and Insurgency Center, OGI, [redacted]

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Soviet and Soviet Surrogate Training of Insurgents

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 February 1985
was used in this report.*

The Soviet Union and its surrogates—East Germany, Bulgaria, Cuba, and Vietnam—conduct and facilitate a substantial number of military training programs for Third World insurgents. [redacted] we have identified 20 major training sites worldwide and established that Moscow and its surrogates have trained guerrillas involved in at least 32 of the 40 major insurgencies during the last two decades. [redacted]

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In addition to its own training programs, the USSR encourages and provides considerable funding and logistic support for training by its surrogates who, by extension, bear the brunt of any fallout. The East Germans have developed a continuing training relationship with Libya, and Cuba is heavily involved with a number of Latin American insurgent groups. This distancing gives the USSR plausible denial and thereby the ability to maintain diplomatic relations with governments that are combating Soviet-surrogate-trained insurgents.

Training by the Soviet Union and its surrogates has produced thousands of guerrillas who receive instruction in basic military and guerrilla warfare skills and use of modern weaponry, including artillery and surface-to-air missiles. These insurgents also receive instruction in political organization, ideological indoctrination, and, in some cases, training in staging terrorist attacks. The heaviest concentration of facilities is in Cuba, where Havana, faced with extensive demands for training, has been forced to assign quotas. Current priority is given to insurgents from El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa (SWAPO).

Insurgent training has enabled Moscow and its allies to:

- Initiate, revitalize, or perpetrate armed struggles against pro-Western regimes.
- Improve ties with successful revolutionary regimes in Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua.
- Establish a network of contacts and, in some cases, agents, within the Third World.

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Preface**Scope Note**

This paper addresses the insurgent training of the Soviet Union and its surrogates. Emphasis is on who does the training, where it takes place, what is taught, and who attends. The following definitions were used:

- *Insurgents* are members of an organization committed to a protracted political/military struggle to replace a national regime or create an independent country. These organizations usually consist of an irregular military force that fights guerrilla war and a covert party organization that mobilizes resources and popular support.
- *Insurgent training* consists of instruction in basic military skills—small-arms use, land navigation, field hygiene—the principles of guerrilla war, and political organization—cadre development, propaganda techniques, and front organizations.
- *Surrogate trainers* are those countries with close political, economic, and military ties to the Soviet Union whose:
 - Training programs for insurgents are extensive.
 - Efforts, at a minimum, are coordinated with and monitored by the Soviets.
 - Programs draw heavily on Soviet resources to finance and conduct training.
 - Training supports—and not coincidentally—Soviet policy interests.

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**Soviet and Soviet Surrogate
Training of Insurgents**

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The Soviet Union

Since the 1948 Communist International in Delhi, when Stalin's call for wars of national liberation was made, the Soviet Union has helped train a majority of Third World insurgents. The Soviets have developed elaborate and well-equipped training facilities, extensive courses often lasting up to a year in guerrilla war, a complex logistic network, and a bureaucracy to direct and coordinate their efforts.

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Moscow has tasked separate elements of the GRU, the KGB, and the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU with organizing, conducting, and facilitating insurgent training.

the GRU established a Center for the Training of Special Personnel (insurgents) in the mid-1970s—when Soviet-backed guerrillas were active in Africa and the Middle East.

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Third-Party Training

In addition to running internal training programs, the GRU and the KGB provide considerable support for surrogate-sponsored training, primarily by Cuba for Latin American insurgent groups.

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Soviets provide food, uniforms, and military equipment to insurgent training camps in Laos. The instructors for these Laotian programs are drawn from Vietnamese military personnel, Laotian Government officials, and Thai Communists. Students are reportedly part of the Phak Mai or Green Star movement.

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[REDACTED]

assistance. In many cases, moreover, Moscow has found that its surrogates do a better job at training certain insurgents. [REDACTED]

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Beyond allowing the Soviets to be more selective in whom they train inside the USSR, in our judgment, Moscow's ability to have others train insurgents outside affords the USSR a number of additional benefits. [REDACTED]

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First, it is easier and cheaper to train Africans in Africa and Latin Americans in Cuba than to transport them in large numbers to the Soviet Union. Moreover, for health and experience reasons, the tropical climate and terrain is more conducive to realistic jungle guerrilla training than is Moscow, especially in the winter. [REDACTED]

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Second, there is less risk, more distance, and plausible deniability involved in third-party training. Although the Soviets accrue the benefits of a silent benefactor, the burden of any negative reaction falls on their surrogates. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Third, training by Moscow's surrogates provides an additional bond between the Soviets and their allies. Most surrogate training is conducted with Soviet equipment, coordinated with Soviet advisers, and often supported with Soviet financial and logistic

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There is considerable evidence of close Soviet-Cuban coordination during Cuba's extensive involvement in insurgent training in Africa between the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the same period, however, Moscow and Havana frequently clashed over Cuba's training of Latin American insurgents. Moscow, motivated in part by its diplomatic rivalry with China and recognizing US power in Latin America, favored caution. Havana, although fearful of the United States, pushed for immediate revolution throughout the region. The Cubans favored training and supporting radical factions willing to take immediate violent action. In the mid-1970s, after insurgent failures in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and Argentina, and in response to continued Soviet pressure, the Cubans became more patient. [redacted]

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Since the success of the Sandinista revolution in 1979—which demonstrated the potential for armed revolution in the region—evidence suggests a convergence in Soviet and Cuban policies toward insurgency training in Latin America. Moreover, evidence suggests that Moscow is willing to let Havana take the lead in Latin America. This, we believe, reflects an increased Soviet confidence in Cuban intentions and a recognition that Cuba—because of its proximity, cultural affinity, Third World credentials, and the revolutionary mystique of Fidel Castro—is better suited to cultivate and train Latin Americans. [redacted]

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Cuba

A substantial portion of Soviet Bloc insurgent training is carried out by the Cubans. [redacted]

[redacted] the Cubans conduct an aggressive training program aimed at several levels of an insurgent organization, covering a wide variety of subjects, and tailored to students from a wide variety of backgrounds [redacted]

Over the years, Cuba has been the primary provider of insurgent training for most Latin American leftist revolutionary groups and for numerous African groups—insurgents from Angola, Congo, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Togo, and Tanzania during the 1960s and 1970s, and from the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) today. Evidence suggests that the demand for Cuban training is so substantial—it is often free—that the Cubans have had to set priorities for requests. [redacted]

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North Korea

Syria's involvement in insurgent training—primarily motivated by its desire to force an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and keep its potentially hostile neighbors off balance—generally involves the provision of support and facilities for training members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and other regional groups. [redacted]

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Libya's insurgent training programs were designed primarily for Palestinians and other Arabs involved in operations against Israel. But, as Qadhafi's ambitions as a revolutionary leader grew and the more moderate elements of the PLO increasingly minimized the importance of terrorism, the Libyans began to train insurgents from many parts of the world [redacted] African insurgent groups have emerged in the 1980s as favorite candidates for Libyan training.²

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[redacted] most North Korean insurgent training is for Koreans and is closely tied to North Korea's determination to unify the Korean peninsula. These Koreans are recruited within North Korea, and, to a lesser extent from South Korea and overseas Korean communities. We estimate the number of these trainees to be substantial. We have no evidence to indicate any Soviet involvement in this training or support for an insurgency on the peninsula. [redacted]

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North Korea does maintain a small program of insurgent training for some foreign students both at home and abroad, an effort oriented primarily toward generating foreign support for their unification effort. [redacted]

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**Middle Eastern Actors:
Trainers But Not Surrogates**

Libya, Iran, Syria, and, to some extent, the Palestine Liberation Organization continue to train insurgents. The Iranian, PLO, and Syrian programs have a regional orientation, and Libyan training encompasses Islamic dissidents and insurgents around the world. Iranian, Syrian, Libyan, and PLO insurgent training is generally independent of Moscow. Moreover, each of these actors pursues its own agenda, propagates an ideology that is anti-Communist, and draws heavily on non-Soviet resources to finance and develop its training programs. [redacted]

The PLO insurgent training effort—primarily Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—over the years has instructed dissidents from throughout the Third World. This training, like the PLO itself, has a long history of Soviet ties. [redacted]

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Iran's regionally oriented training program provides a heavy dose of radical Islamic ideology and Ayatollah Khomeini's plans for the elimination of Western influence on Muslim societies. Iran has trained dissidents from a wide variety of national origins. [redacted]

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with considerable political, economic, and military potential. Members of two insurgent groups trained by the Soviets, East Germans, and Cubans have come to power in Africa—the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique—and the Soviet- and Cuban-trained Sandinistas were successful in Nicaragua. Although the training itself was not responsible for the ultimate success of these groups, it certainly enhanced insurgent combat effectiveness while strengthening ties between Moscow and members of these organizations. These benefits are, however, not always the case. In Zimbabwe, the group—ZAPU—supported by the Soviets, ultimately lost to the Chinese-, Yugoslav-, and North Korean-backed ZANU forces, led by Robert Mugabe.

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Communist Bloc Gains

In general, Soviet and Soviet surrogate training for Third World insurgents is a relatively inexpensive, low-risk means of projecting power into key Third World countries—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, South Africa, Namibia, Thailand, among others—and a direct challenge to Western objectives and interests. Over the years, thousands of trained guerrillas and their cadres have returned to various parts of the Third World where they initiate, revitalize, and perpetrate revolutionary struggles against pro-Western regimes. Although it is difficult to measure the quality of the training these guerrillas receive or of their subsequent battlefield performance, US training and insurgency experience suggests that their basic tactical training—weapons, land navigation, small-unit maneuver, etc.—is excellent. Most students arrive with few military skills and, thus, experience a quantum leap in their soldiering.

Cuba, the most active training surrogate, uses its program to project political influence throughout the Third World and provide additional leverage for obtaining Soviet military and economic assistance. Moreover, Cuban insurgent training supports Castro's determination to bring other Marxist-Leninist governments to power in Latin America in hopes of further reducing his sense of hemispheric isolation and perceived vulnerability to pressure from the United States. In certain circumstances, insurgent training provides Havana with significant sway over participants; Cuban influence is not only exerted over the perceptions, political attitudes, and ideology of the students, it frequently affects their actions.

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Finally, the Soviets and their surrogates collect considerable intelligence—a source of substantial potential influence—and sometimes recruit agents through their insurgent training programs.

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The insurgent training of the Soviet Union and its surrogates also burnishes the revolutionary image of each donor, supports the spread of Marxist ideology and revolution, and represents a long-term investment

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Appendix B**Cuban Insurgent Training****Program Evolution**

Cuba's insurgent training has evolved through a series of distinct phases:

1961-68 Following Fidel Castro's consolidation of power, the Cubans embarked on an energetic campaign to support armed insurgency in Central and South America—especially in Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, Bolivia, and Nicaragua—training an estimated 2,500 Latin American leftists inside Cuba. The Cubans were also active in Africa, starting with an insurgent training camp in Ghana in 1961 and a second camp in newly independent Algeria in 1962. Following Che Guevara's tour of Africa in 1964, training support began for anti-Congolese and anti-Portuguese movements in South Africa.

25X1 1968-77 Cuba's commitment to revolution through military means—a re-creation of its own success—was not entirely shared by many reform-minded Communist parties in Latin America nor by the USSR. On the heels of insurgent failures in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and Argentina and in response to pressure from the Soviet Union, the Cubans began to scale down their insurgent training.

25X1 1977-83 In early 1977, following revolutionary successes in Mozambique, Angola, and Ethiopia and Fidel Castro's tour of Africa and the Middle East, Cuban training reaccelerated; Cuban advisers and troops began to flow into Ethiopia and a significant insurgent training effort for foreign students was initiated in Cuba. By 1980, following the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, the training of Salvadoran insurgents, Honduran Communist Party members, and other Latin Americans had also begun to increase markedly.

1984 Groups in Southern Africa and Latin America—especially El Salvador—remain the primary recipients of Cuban insurgent training. Following the late 1983 US invasion of Grenada, the Cubans—reportedly concerned for the survival of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua—temporarily scaled down their support to Latin American insurgent groups.

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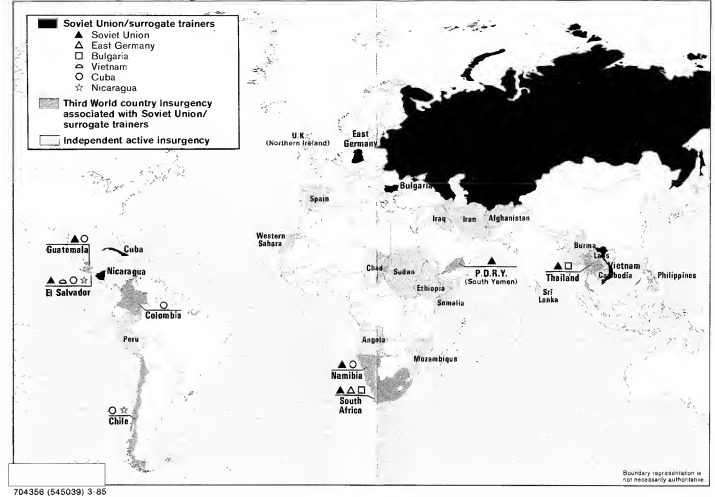
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Soviet and Surrogate Training for Active Insurgencies



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